DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 195 907 CG 014 860

AUTHOR Leary, Mark R.; Schlenker, Barry R.
TITLE Tactical Self-Presentation and Sex Differences in Task-Oriented Leadership Situations.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 10p.: Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (87th, New York, NY, September 1-5, 1979).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attribution Theory; *Behavior Patterns; Competence; Group Behavior; Individual Power; *Interaction; Interpersonal Relationship; *Leadership Responsibility; Leadership Styles; *Performance Factors; *Self Evaluation (Individuals); *Sex Differences; Social Values

ABSTRACT

Through self-presentations, individuals claim a variety of public images that influence how others regard and treat them in social interactions. An examination of self-presentation in a leadership situation focused on three dimensions of leader behavior: competence, socioemotionality, and prominence. Subjects (N=128) were assigned leadership positions in task-oriented groups that did very well or very poorly. The leaders learned that either they or the group were responsible for the performance, and that the other group members either did or did not know the precise locus of responsibility. Males were found to humbly deemphasize their competence and prominence when the others knew of the leader's responsibility for success, but emphasized these attributes when the others did not. Males displayed some compensatory self-presentations following a leader-responsible failure. In contrast, females emphasized their socioemotionality over other attributes irrespective of the combination of treatments. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED195907

Tactical Self-Presentation and Sex Differences in Task-Oriented Leadership Situations

Mark R. Leary and Barry R. Schlenker

University of Florida

Paper presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, New York, 1979.

CG 014860

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Barry R. Schlenker

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Tactical Self-Presentation and Sex Differences in
Task-Oriented Leadership Situations

Problem. Through their self-presentations, people claim a variety of public images that influence how others regard and treat them in social interactions (Goffman, 1959; Schlenker, in press). Given that an individual is motivated to make a favorable impression on a particular audience, at least three factors should be considered when selecting self-presentations: (1) the type of images the audience is most likely to value; (2) the images one can successfully claim without refutation by publicly known "facts;" and (3) the images one can humbly deemphasize because publicly known "facts" already give one credit for them.

People generally adjust their self-presentations to match what they believe the audience values, thereby attempting to increase their attractiveness in the others' eyes (Jones & Wortman, 1973). Self-presentations, though, are held in check by publicly known "facts" about the actor which could refute any overly aggrandizing claims. For instance, people whose failures are a matter of public record present themselves consistently with that record; people are more self-aggrandizing when failures are only "private" (e.g., Frey, 1978; Schlenker, 1975). People who fail also seem to compensate for the damaging information by enhancing their self-presentations on dimensions that are irrelevant to the failure (Baumeister & Jones, 1978). Thus, public failures should result in less favorable self-presentations on dimensions that are relevant to the failure but more favorable ones on dimensions that are irrelevant.

When publicly known "facts" allow audiences to infer an actor's admirable qualities, he or she can afford to be modest. Actors thereby receive credit for possession of the attribute, don't risk censure for braggadocio, and gain

additional positive regard for their modesty (e.g., Baumeister & Jones, 1978; Schneider, 1969). Publicly known successes allow actors to concentrate their self-presentations on qualities the audience values but may not already associate with them. When a success is unknown to the audience, people's self-presentations should become more favorable on the relevant dimension in order to inform the audience of the accomplishment.

The present study examined self-presentations in a leadership situation, thereby focusing subjects on specific attributes that should be positively regarded by group members. Stogdill (1974) identified three major dimensions of leader behavior that have emerged from research: competence, socioemotionality, and prominence. As self-presentational dimensions, competence refers to the appearance of possessing the requisite abilities to lead the group toward successful goal completion; socioemotionality refers to the degree to which the leader appears warm, friendly, and approachable; and prominence refers to the appearance of standing out from the group through interpersonal influence. In the present study, subjects served as leaders of groups that did very well or very poorly on a task. Additionally, either the leader alone or the group-at-large was responsible for the performance, and the other group members supposedly did or did not know the degree to which the leader affected the group score. Prior to starting a second task, the leaders completed self-presentational questionnaires that were to be shown to the other group members.

Based on the above reasoning, the following hypotheses were tested. First, leaders should emphasize self-presentations of competence and prominence when their responsibility for success is unrecognized by the group members, and humbly deemphasize these attributes when personal responsibility for success is public knowledge. Second, self-presentations of competence should be deemphasized more following a failure for which the leader was known rather than not known to be highly responsible, thus conforming to the "facts."

Third, leaders should present themselves as more socioemotional following high responsibility for failure, particularly when their responsibility is known, thus compensating for the lack of task success.

Subjects. One hundred and twenty-eight subjects partially fulfilled a class requirement through participation. Each served in one cell of the 2 (success or failure) by 2 (leader or group responsible) by 2 (other group members do or do not know locus of responsibility for score) by 2 (subject sex) factorial. No two subjects in a single group served in the same manipulated cell of the design.

Procedure. Subjects, in four-person, same sexed groups, were seated around a large table that was partitioned into sections to eliminate visual contact. They first completed a bogus measure of leadership ability which was purportedly used to assign one of the members to the role of group leader. A rationale was provided for informing subjects that the person who was selected leader might not have the "best" scores on the profile; thus, mere selection as leader did not imply that a person was the most qualified one in the group. In actuality, all four subjects were told they had been selected "the" leader. Subjects then worked individually on a set of three decision problems, each of which described a moral or legal dilemma and contained multiple choice questions about how the problem should be solved. The experimenter collected the answers, pretended to tabulate them on a master sheet, and gave each subject a prearranged carbon copy that ostensibly described how each of the group members answered the problems. Subjects were then asked to reconsider the problems in light of the others' answers and privately "vote" on the final solutions they thought the group as a whole should adopt.

The experimenter pretended to score the final responses and gave subjects a feedback sheet indicating that the group had performed either very well (93%) or very poorly (31%). In addition, subjects learned that the group's

score was based on their answers alone (leader responsible) or on an average of all the members' answers (group responsible). Subjects also were told either that, as leader, only they knew how the score was calculated (not known condition) or that all group members knew (known condition).

Subjects next completed self-presentational questionnaires which they believed they would exchan ith one another prior to working face-to-face on a second set of problems. (To hold constant subjects' expectations of how responsible they would be on the second set, they were told their votes would be weighted twice as heavily as one of the followers' votes. As desired, a check of these expectations revealed no differences between initial responsibility conditions.) The questionnaire asked subjects to rate themselves on sets of bipolar adjectives selected a priori to tap the three dimensions of interest: competence, socioemotionality, and prominence.

Results and Conclusions. Manipulation checks revealed that the desired perceptions were induced; measures of group performance, the leader's responsibility for the performance, and how subjects believed the other members' thought the score was calculated, all showed the appropriate main effects, $ps < .001$.

Cronbach's alpha indicated that all three self-presentation dimensions demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability: competence (.74), prominence (.83), and socioemotionality (.75). A split-plot ANOVA was performed on the dimension means, treating the three dimensions as three levels of a "repeated" factor. This allowed an examination of self-presentations made on one dimension relative to another. Multiple comparisons were performed via simple effects tests.

The ANOVA revealed a 5-way interaction of performance by responsibility by knowledge by sex by dimension, $F(2,111) = 3.66$, $p < .03$. Means entering into the interaction are presented in Table 1. Although the hypotheses were

not fully supported by either sex, males' self-presentations were generally more consistent with predictions than were females'.

As predicted, males emphasized self-presentations of prominence and competence, relative to socioemotionality, to a greater degree when the leader was responsible for success and responsibility was not known rather than known, $p < .05$. Thus, successful males humbly deemphasized their influence when the group members knew of their high responsibility, but emphasized these attributes when members were not aware of their responsibility. When the group as a whole was responsible, successful males did not show such relative effects, instead choosing to emphasize their high standing on all three dimensions.

Males in the Leader Responsible-Not Known condition emphasized both competence and prominence more than socioemotionality when the group succeeded rather than failed, $p < .05$. When the group as a whole was responsible for failure (and the leaders therefore did not have to admit high personal blame), males emphasized their prominence and competence as much as did the successful leaders. Although these findings are consistent with some of the reasoning described in the introduction, the second prediction was not supported. Males did not emphasize their competence more when they were not known rather than known to be responsible for failure. Perhaps the fact that the experimenter knew of their high responsibility for failure, even when the other group members did not, served as a constraint on claiming high competence.

Third, when the leader was responsible for performance but responsibility was not known, males emphasized self-presentations of socioemotionality, relative to prominence and competence, to a greater degree if the group failed than succeeded, $p < .05$. Although this effect is consistent with the compensation-following-failure hypothesis, it should have been stronger when the leader's responsibility was known rather than not known; the reverse occurred. Males who were known to be responsible for failure presented themselves quite

low on all three dimensions. It is not clear whether these low self-presentations, made under the worst possible combination of treatment, represent a depressed general mood, a self-attribution of the lack of all leadership skills, or the tactical belief that any attempt at compensation might be viewed as a self-serving attempt at aggrandizement.

Unlike males, females generally emphasized their socioemotionality over their prominence and competence, $p < .05$. This finding is consistent with prior research indicating that females are more interpersonally oriented in group settings while males are more task oriented (e.g., Kahn, Hottes, & Davis, 1971; Shaw, 1975). The only exception for females occurred in the Success-Group Responsible-Not Known condition, where prominence and competence were emphasized and socioemotionality was deemphasized, $p < .05$. Although such an effect might suggest an attempt to associate themselves with the successful group outcome, it is not clear why it was limited only to this condition. On the whole, the females' self-presentations failed to support the hypotheses. One might conjecture that females, supposedly more familiar with traditional roles as socioemotional rather than task leaders, may have failed to fully recognize the tactical self-presentation possibilities of the task leadership situation. Alternatively, perhaps females recognized the possibilities, but simply valued (or believed the other members valued) socioemotional qualities in a leader more than tactical shifts in prominence and competence. Whether such sex defferences might be reversed in socioemotional leadership situations remains to be investigated.

References

Baumeister, R. F., & Jones, E. E. When self-presentation is constrained by the target's knowledge: Consistency and compensation. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1978, 36, 608-618.

Frey, D. Reactions to success and failure in public and private conditions. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 1978, 14, 172-179.

Goffman, E. The presentation of self in everyday life. New York: Doubleday, 1959.

Kahn, A., Hottes, J., & Davis, W. L. Cooperation and optimal responding in the Prisoner's Dilemma Game: Effects of sex and physical attractiveness. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1971, 17, 267-279.

Jones, E. E., & Wortman, C. Ingratiation: An attributional approach. Morristown, N. J.: General Learning Press, 1973.

Schlenker, B. R. Self-presentation: Managing the impression of consistency when reality interferes with self-enhancement. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1975, 32, 1030-1037.

Schlenker, B. R. Impression Management: The Self-concept, Social Identity and Interpersonal Relations. Brooks/Cole, in press.

Schneider, D. J. Tactical Self-presentation after success and failure. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1969, 13, 262-268.

Shaw, M. E. Group dynamics: The psychology of small groups (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975.

Stodgill, R. M. Handbook of leadership. New York: Free Press, 1974.

Table 1

Effects of Group Performance, Responsibility, Knowledge of Responsibility, and Subject Sex on Self-presentations of Prominence, Socioemotionality, and Competence

			Prominence	Socioemotionality	Competence
Males					
Success	Leader Resp.	Known	4.8	4.9	5.4
		Not known	5.3	4.1	5.6
	Group Resp.	Known	5.3	5.3	5.7
		Not Known	5.5	5.3	5.6
Failure	Leader Resp.	Known	4.7	4.7	5.1
		Not Known	4.7	5.3	5.0
	Group Resp.	Known	5.5	4.9	5.6
		Not Known	5.3	4.5	5.5
Females					
Success	Leader Resp.	Known	5.3	5.6	5.5
		Not Known	5.1	5.7	5.3
	Group Resp.	Known	5.3	5.9	5.4
		Not Known	5.6	4.8	5.6
Failure	Leader Resp.	Known	4.8	5.4	5.2
		Not Known	4.3	5.2	4.9
	Group Resp.	Known	4.9	5.7	5.2
		Not Known	5.2	5.4	5.4

Note: Scores could range from 1 (negative) to 7 (positive).